

Jane Addams. "The Art-Work Done By Hull-House, Chicago". *The Forum* v.19 (July, 1895); 614-617.

The attempt of Hull-House to make the aesthetic and artistic a vital influence in the lives of its neighbors, and a matter of permanent interest to them, inevitably took the form of a many-sided experiment. The direction of the effort naturally fell into the hands of Miss Starr, one of the founders of Hull-House, who not only feeds her own mind and finds her highest enjoyment in Art, but who believes that every soul has a right to be thus fed and solaced. The first furnishings of Hull-House were therefore pictures. They were [end page 614] hung upon all the wall spaces and were largely selected from photographs which the two original residents had the previous year together purchased in Europe.

From the first year Miss Starr has had large and enthusiastic classes in the "History of Art"; a number of the students have attended them consecutively for four years. There is abundant testimony that the lectures and pictures have quite changed the tone of their minds; for they have become, of course, perfectly familiar with the photographs of the best things, and have cared for them, not "as a means of culture," but as an expression of the highest human thought and perception. One of these has bought from her scanty earnings a number of classic works of art which will make her house really charming when she is married next fall, and more than that will be to her the same vital connection with the minds "who have transfigured human life," as a fine library is to the student who has time for constant reading. Within a short walk from Hull-House a little parlor has been completely transformed by the Fra Angelico over the mantel and the Luca della Robbia on the walls, from which walls the picture scarfs and paper flowers have fallen away. A few doors down the street a tiny bedroom has been changed from a place in which a fragile factory girl slept the sleep of the exhausted, into one where she "just loves to lie in bed and look at my pictures; it's so like Art Class."

A small circulating loan collection of pictures has proved a satisfactory part of the attempt to make art a means of education. The collection numbers, at present, not more than seventy pictures, and very little more than one

hundred dollars have been expended upon it. The pictures are for the most part photographs selected with great care, from choice things only, whether modern or old, and with a view to variety of appeal. to the interest and taste of the borrowers. Some water-color sketches have been given and lent, and the collection contains an Arundel print, and several colored prints of Fra Angelico's angels. The latter are so popular as to be engaged in advance. The loan and return of each picture is recorded, with the date, and the name and address of the borrower, upon a card. It is expected that the picture will be either exchanged or renewed at the end of two weeks. The borrowers frequently become attached to them, and prefer to keep the old one longer rather than to have a new one.

On the occasion of the death of a baby neighbor the resident in [end page 615] charge of the pictures placed over the little one two colored Fra Angelico angels, in simple white and gold frames, with no certainty that they would, be especially noticed or cared for. The tone of the room was entirely changed by them. Everybody spoke of them. The children said that the angels had come to take their sister, and that they were praying for the baby and singing to her. Some days after the mother asked timidly if she might buy the pictures and keep them in memory of the little one. A wax wreath encircling a coffin-plate hung in the room as a memorial of a child who had died before.

A member of the Hull-House Women's Club holds receptions of an informal kind to show her pictures to the children in her street. Another good mother, who is a graduate of the early Chicago high schools, but who is battling with life against the odds too often found in a tenement-house, of a drinking husband and ever increasing poverty, takes the pictures from the collection as she takes the books and lectures and social opportunities of Hull-House, not only as that which will sustain her own life, but as that which will enable her to realize for her children some of the things she dreamed out for them. The oldest one of her eight children saw the light in a pretty suburban house which she and the father, a promising State senator, had built. This mother borrowed Mrs. Jameson's " Sacred and Legendary Art, " and read the story of St. Genevieve to her children

while they had Puvis de Chavannes's St. Genevieve pictures, and she took the Fra Angelico " Paradise" a second. time because she thought it gave the children a pleasant idea of Heaven.

The first building erected for Hull-House contained a little art exhibit room, carefully planned with a high, dark wainscoting and a north light, that fifty pictures might be exhibited to the best advantage. Since its opening it has had eight loan exhibits: five of oil paintings, one of old prints and engravings, one of water-colors, and another of sued photographs as would be most helpful in the public schools. The total number of votes cast for the favorite picture at the last exhibit was 5,988. To quote from Miss Starr:

"An effort has been made in these exhibits to show only pictures which combine, to a considerable degree, an elevated tone with technical excellence, and at no time can a very large assortment of such pictures be obtained. There is an advantage on the side of a small exhibition carefully selected, especially to an untrained public. The confusion and fatigue of mind which a person of no trained powers of selection suffers in passing his eyes wearily over the assortment of good, bad and indifferent which the average picture exhibit presents, leaves [end page 616] him nothing with which to assimilate the good when he finds it, and his chances of finding it are small. Frequently recurring exhibitions of a few very choice pictures might do more toward educating the public taste of the locality in which they occur than many times the number less severely chosen and less often seen."

This leads to the "Art in Schools" movement, in which Miss Starr was the Chicago pioneer. With the means at her disposal she has been able to put a number of good pictures into each room of the school nearest to Hull-House. A society has since been inaugurated in connection with the Chicago Woman's Club that has for its object the decorating of all the public schools in the city. Much has already been accomplished in tinting the walls and supplying the rooms with casts and pictures. The significance of the pictures are carefully explained to the children, and there is no doubt that the imagination receives a strong impulse toward the heroic and historic.

JANE ADDAMS.

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